

Comparing the American Community Survey (ACS) and Current Population Survey (CPS)

Vicki Mack, Data Scientist, American Community Survey Office

Tim Marshall, Assistant Survey Director, Current Population Survey

March 30, 2022

Slides available at:

census.gov/data/academy/webinars/2022/comparing-the-acs-and-cps.html

Comparing the ACS and CPS

Outline

- **American Community Survey (ACS) basics**
- Current Population Survey (CPS) basics
- Similarities and differences
- When to use each survey: ACS or CPS?
- Resources for learning more
- Questions


The American Community Survey

The Foundation

The American Community Survey is on the leading edge of survey design, continuous improvement, and data quality


- The nation's most current, reliable, and accessible data source for local statistics on critical planning topics such as age, children, veterans, commuting, education, income, and employment
- Surveys **3.5 million** addresses and informs over **\$675 billion** of federal government spending each year
- Covers **40+ topics**, supports over **300** evidence-based Federal government uses, and produces **11 billion** estimates each year
- Typically provides three key annual data releases:
 - 1-year Estimates (for large populations, geographies of 65,000+ population)
 - 1-year Supplemental Estimates (for small populations, geographies of 20,000+ population)
 - 5-year Estimates (for very small populations, geographies down to Census Tracts and Block Groups)

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 **The American Community Survey**

Start Here


You have two ways to respond:

 Respond online today at:
<https://respond.census.gov/acs>

OR

 Complete this form and mail it back as soon as possible.

Your response is required by law.
The American Community Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This survey is one of only a few surveys for which all recipients are required by law to respond. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information.

 If you need help or have questions about completing this form, please call 1-800-354-7271.

Text Telephone (TTY):
Call 1-800-582-8330.

¿NECESITA AYUDA? Llame sin cargo alguno al 1-877-833-5625.

For more information about the American Community Survey, visit our website at: <https://www.census.gov/acs>

Please print the name and telephone number of the person who is filling out this form. We will only contact you if needed for official Census Bureau business.

Last Name

First Name MI

Area Code + Number -

How many people are living or staying at this address?


- **INCLUDE** everyone who is living or staying here for more than 2 months.
- **INCLUDE** yourself if you are living here for more than 2 months.
- **INCLUDE** anyone else staying here who does not have another place to stay, even if they are here for 2 months or less.
- **DO NOT INCLUDE** anyone who is living somewhere else for more than 2 months, such as a college student living away or someone in the Armed Forces on deployment.

Number of people

Fill out pages 2 - 7 for everyone, including yourself, who is living or staying at this address for more than 2 months. Then complete the rest of the form.

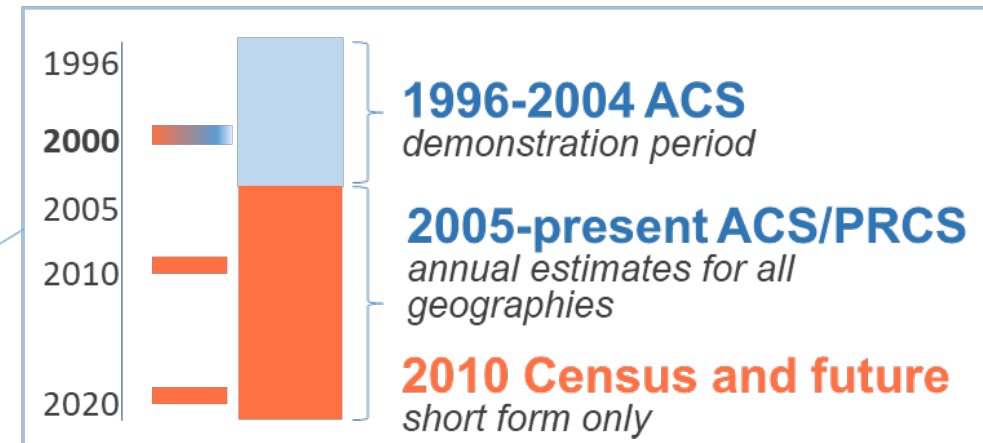
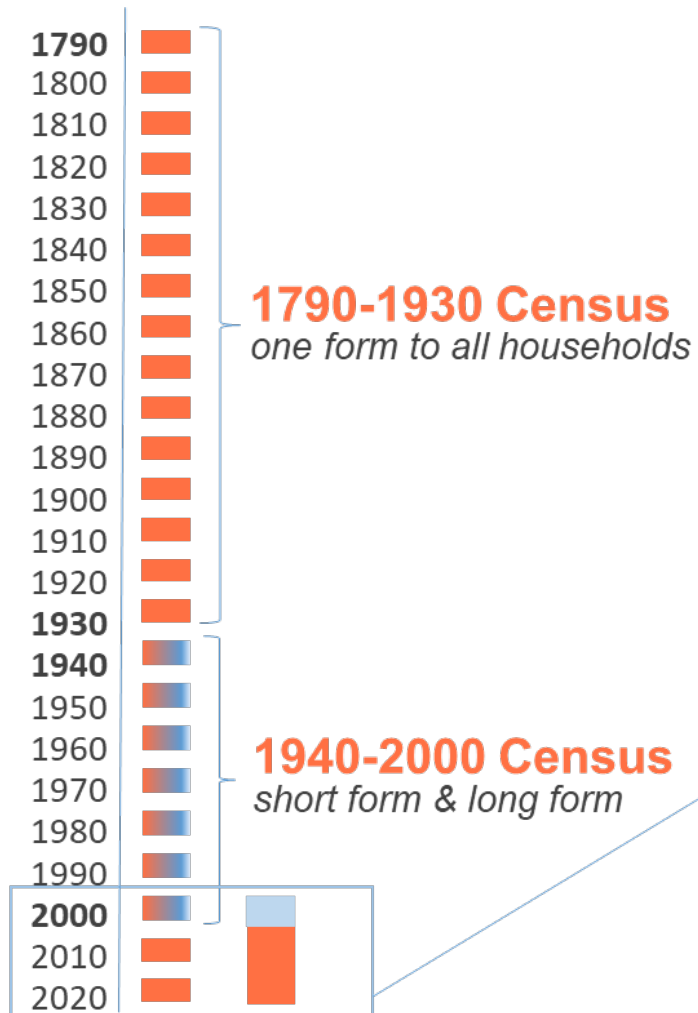
Form **ACS-1(2021)**
(05-18-2021)

OMB No. 0607-0810
OMB No. 0607-0926



The American Community Survey

Census & ACS



The American Community Survey

How is the American Community Survey Different From a Census?

ACS

Census

Purpose

Sample estimates

Official counts

Collects

Detailed social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics

Basic demographics

Produces

Population and housing characteristics

Population and housing totals

New Data Every

Year

10 years

Data Reflect

Period of time

Point in time

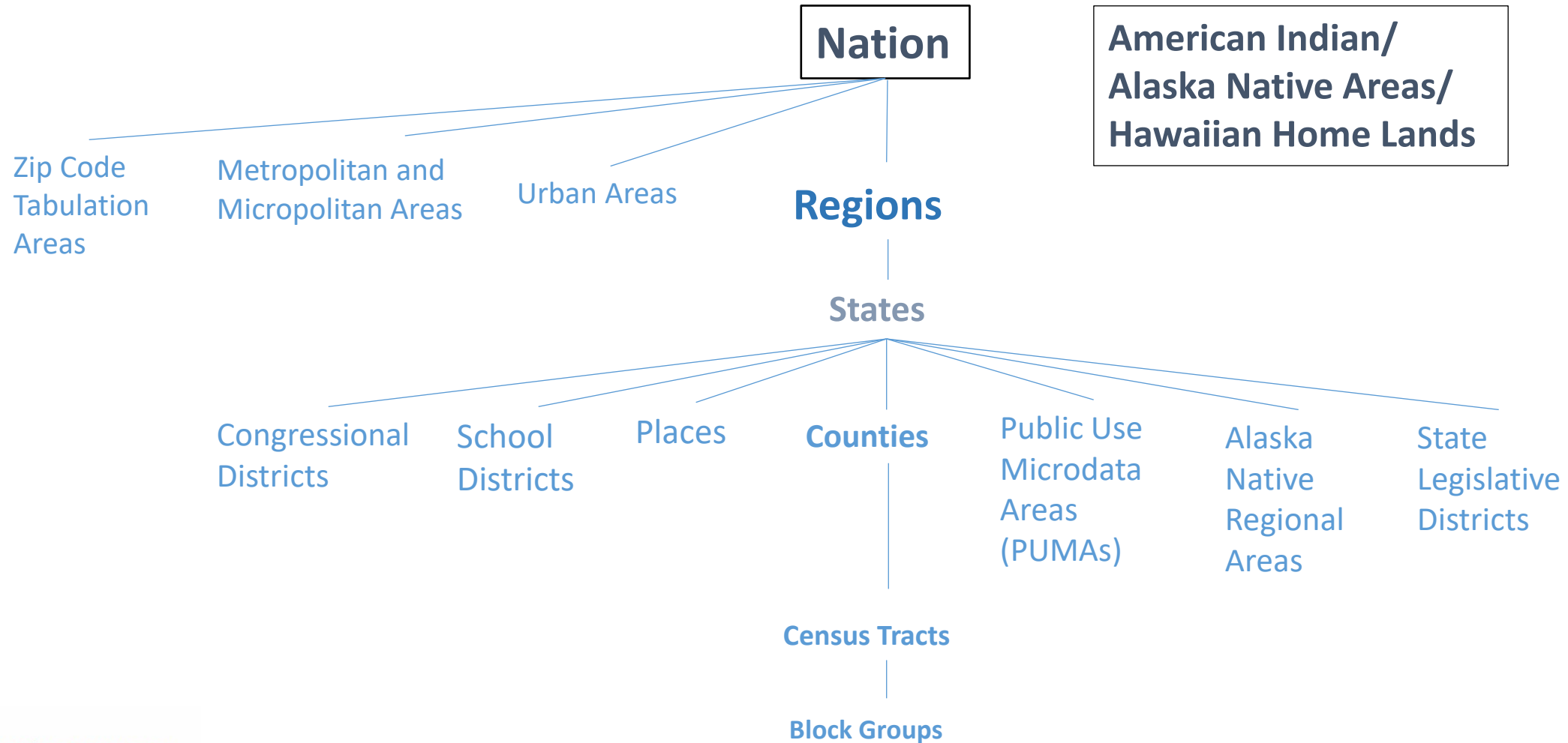
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Content Overview

POPULATION		HOUSING
SOCIAL Ancestry Citizenship Citizen Voting Age Population Disability Educational Attainment Fertility Grandparents Language Marital Status Migration School Enrollment Veterans	DEMOGRAPHIC Age Hispanic Origin Race Relationship Sex	Computer & Internet Use Costs (Mortgage, Rent, Taxes, Insurance) Heating Fuel Home Value Occupancy Plumbing/Kitchen Facilities Structure Tenure (Own/Rent) Utilities Vehicles Year Built/ Year Moved In
	ECONOMIC Class of Worker Commuting Employment Status Food Stamps (SNAP) Health Insurance Hours/Week, Weeks/Year Income Industry & Occupation	

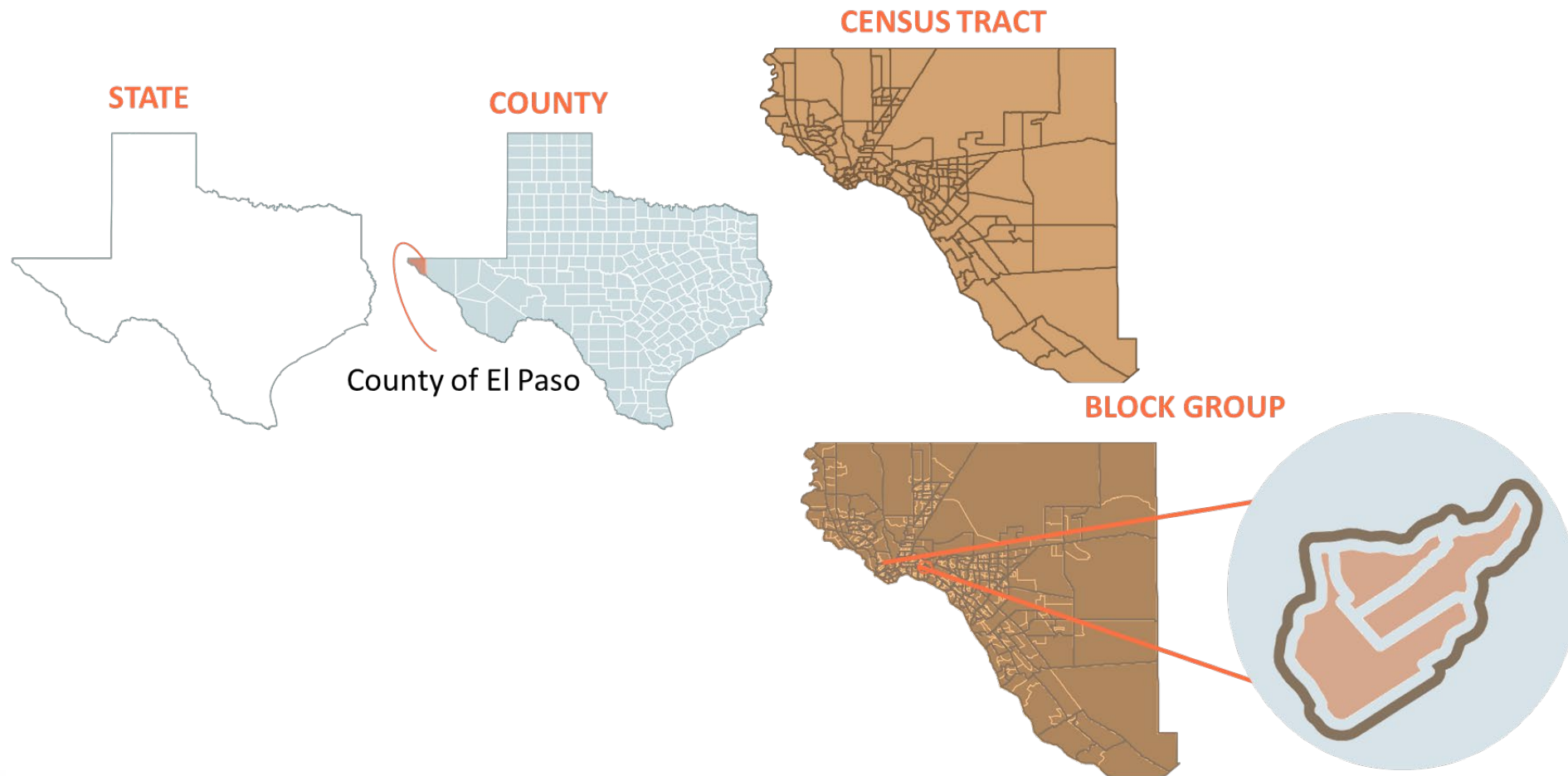
The American Community Survey

ACS Geography



The American Community Survey

Selected Census Geographic Concepts



The American Community Survey

Data Collection Process

SELF-RESPONSE



NONRESPONSE FOLLOWUP



The American Community Survey

Availability of Data Products

Estimated Population of Geographic Area	1-Year Estimates	1-Year Supplemental Estimates	5-Year Estimates
65,000 or more	X	X	X
20,000 to 64,999		X	X
Less than 20,000			X
Typical Release Date (Occurs in the calendar year after data collection)	September	October	December

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Current Population Survey

The Basics

The Current Population Survey began in 1942 in response to a need that arose in the late 1930s for reliable and up-to-date estimates on unemployment.

A monthly survey sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It is the source of the national unemployment rate, along with a wide range of information about employment, unemployment, and people not in the labor force.

Surveys approximately 59,000 households each month, using a probability-selected sample of all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia

- Information obtained includes:
 - Employment and unemployment
 - Hours worked/Absent
 - Full-time/Part-time
 - Industry and Occupation
 - Job search methods
 - Usual weekly earnings
- Monthly data release:
 - Press Release and Tables through the Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - Microdata file and documentation through [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov)



Current Population Survey

Sample Design – A Sample of Addresses

- Rotation Pattern 4-8-4
- In sample four consecutive months
- Off eight months
- In for the same four months a year later
- 75 % month-to-month overlap
- 50 % year-to-year overlap

Current Population Survey

Monthly Sample Size

- 72,000 assigned Households
- 13,000 Ineligible Households
 - Vacant
 - Converted to Business
 - Destroyed
- 59,000 Eligible Households
 - 44,000 Interviews
 - 15,000 Noninterviews

Current Population Survey

Data Collection Cycle

- Interviewing begins Sunday of the week containing the 19th
- Concludes about 10 days later
- Data processing and delivery to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- BLS publishes Employment Situation the first Friday of the following month
- Preparation begins for the next month's survey

Current Population Survey

Geographic Concepts



Nation and States

Current Population Survey

Content Overview

POPULATION		HOUSING
SOCIAL Educational Attainment Marital Status Cohabitation School Enrollment Country of birth Veterans Disability Citizenship	DEMOGRAPHIC Age Sex Race Hispanic Origin Relationship	Occupancy Type of Structure Tenure (Own/Rent)
	ECONOMIC Class of Worker Employment Status Hours/Week, Weeks/Year Weekly Earnings Industry & Occupation Job Certification	

Current Population Survey

Supplemental Data Collections

- CPS Supplements: What are they?
- Economic and social well-being of the U.S.
- Take advantage of CPS features, such as large sample size
- One-time survey or periodically?
- Examples: Unemployment Insurance, Disability, Veterans, Food Security, Voting and Registration, School Enrollment
- The most visible: Annual Social and Economic Survey (ASEC)

Current Population Survey

Annual Social and Economic Survey

- Conducted in February, March, April
- Topics
 - Work Experience
 - Income, poverty
 - Migration
 - Household composition
 - Health Insurance Coverage
 - Noncash Benefits
- Sample taken from CPS completed interviews

Current Population Survey

Annual Social and Economic Survey

- Other publications, tabulations, and papers
 - Health Insurance Coverage in the United States
<https://www.census.gov/topics/health/health-insurance.html>
 - Supplemental Poverty Measures
<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty.html>
 - America's Families and Living Arrangements
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/families/cps-2021.html>
 - Educational Attainment in the United States
<https://www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment.html>
 - Geographic Mobility
<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration.html>

Current Population Survey

Annual Social and Economic Survey



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Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021
REPORT NUMBER P60-273
EMILY A. SHRIDER, MELISSA KOLLAR, FRANCES CHEN, AND JESSICA SEMEGA

Introduction

This report presents data on income, earnings, income inequality, and poverty in the United States based on information collected in the 2021 and earlier Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.





census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.html

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Comparing the ACS and CPS

Similarities

- Population estimates
- Population characteristic estimates by age, Hispanic origin, race, and sex
- Employment and unemployment data; industry and occupation data
- Poverty data
- Income data
- Education and school enrollment data
- Marital status and household size,
- Health insurance, citizenship, and births data

Comparing the ACS and CPS

Differences

	ACS	CPS
<i>Purpose</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace decennial census long form by providing annual and multi-year estimates of selected social, economic, and housing characteristics of the population for many geographic areas and subpopulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce the official monthly estimates of employment and unemployment for the United States, and annual average estimates for states and metropolitan areas.
<i>New Data Every</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Month and Year
<i>Data Collection Methods</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet self-response, Mail, and personal-visit interviews for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The ACS is a mandatory survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone and personal-visit interviews for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The CPS is a voluntary survey.
<i>Tools to access data</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> data.census.gov, File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site, Application Programming Interface (API), QuickFacts, and other tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureau of Labor Statistics website, CPS website

Comparing the ACS and CPS

How are the ACS and CPS different (continued)

	ACS	CPS
<i>Sample Size</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 3.5 million addresses per year. Data are collected from about one-twelfth of the sample each month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 72,000 addresses per month. An address is in sample for 4 consecutive months, out for the following 8 months, back in for the next 4 months, and then retired from the sample.
<i>Geography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1-year ACS estimates contain geographies with populations of 65,000 or more5-year ACS estimates can be found down to the block group level for select tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nation and states
<i>Reference Period</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The ACS reference period for select questions (like income and the number of weeks worked) is the 12-month period prior to the response month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The reference period for select questions (like earnings and employment) is the 12th of the month.

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Comparing the ACS and CPS

When to use each survey: ACS or CPS?

Interest	Product
Population and housing unit estimates and demographic characteristics for local geographies (ZIP Code Tabulation Areas, Census Tracts, Block Groups)	ACS
Home heating, home values, structure type, plumbing, and kitchen facilities	ACS
Social and economic characteristics	ACS and CPS
Official monthly estimates of employment and unemployment	CPS

Comparing the ACS and CPS

When to use each survey: ACS or CPS? (more examples)

Interest	Product
Civilian and institutionalized population	ACS
Official national annual estimate of poverty	CPS
Official poverty estimates for state, counties, Zip Codes, Census Tracts, and Block groups	ACS

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- Purpose:
 - Improve understanding of the value and utility of ACS data.
 - Promote information sharing among data users about key ACS data issues and applications
- Membership is free and open to all interested ACS data users
- Webinars and special sessions at professional meetings planned
- Users group website and online community

The American Community Survey

Main Page

The screenshot shows the main page of the American Community Survey (ACS) on the Census Bureau website. The page has a dark blue header with the United States Census Bureau logo and a search bar. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: BROWSE BY TOPIC, EXPLORE DATA, LIBRARY, SURVEYS/ PROGRAMS, INFORMATION FOR..., FIND A CODE, and ABOUT US. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with a list of links: About the ACS, Data, Geography & ACS, Guidance for Data Users, Information For..., Library, Methodology, Microdata, News & Updates, Operations and Administration, Respond to the ACS, and Technical Documentation. The main content area has a large heading "American Community Survey (ACS)" followed by a paragraph: "The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation." Below this is a video player showing a classroom scene. At the bottom, there are three buttons: "RESPOND NOW" (with a mouse cursor), "Find ACS Data" (with a pie chart icon), and "SUBSCRIBE" (with a mouse cursor).

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Operations and Administration

Respond to the ACS

Technical Documentation

American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation.

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2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Experimental Data Products Now Available

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WITHIN AMERICAN
COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

Comparing ACS Data

Handbooks

Statistical Testing Tool

Subjects Included in the
Survey

Training Presentations

Using ACS Data with
Open-Source Software

When to Use 1-year or 5-
year Estimates

Which Data Table or Tool
Should I Use?

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Guidance for Data Users

The American Community Survey (ACS) not only produces data about our nation's population every year, we also provide a variety of resources to help data users understand how to use and access this information.

Learn more about the list of subjects included in the survey, different types of data products and tools available, handbooks geared toward distinct data user groups, and more.

Join the ACS Data Users Group and Online Community

The American Community Survey Data Users Group improves understanding of the value and utility of ACS data and promotes information sharing among data users about key ACS data issues and applications. Membership is free and open to all interested ACS data users.

To facilitate communication among ACS data users, the Census Bureau and Population Reference Bureau maintain the [ACS Online Community](#) where people can share messages, materials, and announcements related to the ACS. We also plan the [ACS Data Users Conference](#).

Join over 2,500 data users who are part of the [ACS Online Community](#)!

JOIN THE ACS DATA USERS GROUP AND ONLINE COMMUNITY

Subjects Included in the Survey

Related Information

American Community
Survey Data

Technical
Documentation

American Community
Survey Data Releases

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census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/library/handbooks.html

census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance.html

The Current Population Survey

Main Page



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REVISION: Important Announcement for 2022 Public Use Files.

[// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / Current Population Survey \(CPS\)](#)

WITHIN OUR SURVEYS & PROGRAMS

[About this Survey](#)

[Data](#)


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[Technical Documentation](#)

Current Population Survey (CPS)

The Current Population Survey (CPS), sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), is the primary source of labor force statistics for the population of the United States.




Cosponsored By:




[CPS Data](#)[CPS Questionnaire](#)[Methodology](#)

The Current Population Survey

Data Page



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[Current Population Survey Data Tables](#)

[Current Population Survey Data Tools](#)

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Current Population Survey Datasets

Public Use Microdata File Information

Click below for a description of the monthly files and how to obtain them, a discussion of the data dictionaries, and example calculations of estimates.

[Public Use Microdata File Information](#) [PDF - < 1.0 MB]

Data from the Current Population Survey comes in many forms, many of which are accessible below.

Annual Social and Economic Supplements

Provides data concerning families, household composition, educational attainment, health insurance coverage, income sources, poverty, geographic mobility.

Basic Monthly CPS

Data files and data dictionary of the basic monthly CPS, sorted by most recent year and month collected.

CPS Basic Extraction Files

Extract microdata files and data dictionary: 2000-based weights plus revised industry and occupation for Jan. 2000-Dec. 2002; Disability data from 2008.

CPS Certification Items Extract Files

Extract microdata files and dictionary: Items related to job certification for 2015-2016.

CPS Supplement and Replicate Weights

Data files and dictionary, plus replicate weights if available, for CPS Supplement data collections; sorted alphabetically by name, then by year collected.

Comparing the ACS and CPS

Continue the Conversation

Customer Service Center

1-800-923-8282 or 301-763-INFO (4636)

Email Us

ACS acso.users.support@census.gov

CPS dsd.cps@census.gov

Website

census.gov/acs

census.gov/cps

Email Alerts

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCENSUS/signup/12426>

Social Media @uscensusbureau

#ACSdata

#CPSdata

Source Us

U.S. Census Bureau, [YYYY – YYYY] American Community Survey [1/5]-year estimates

U.S. Census Bureau, [YYYY] Current Population Survey